

Fourth Judicial District

Hennepin County Family Court

Solicitation of Interest

Co-Parent Education, Case Management and Service Delivery

June 30, 2007

NOTE: Proposals are due September 7, 2007

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I. Introduction

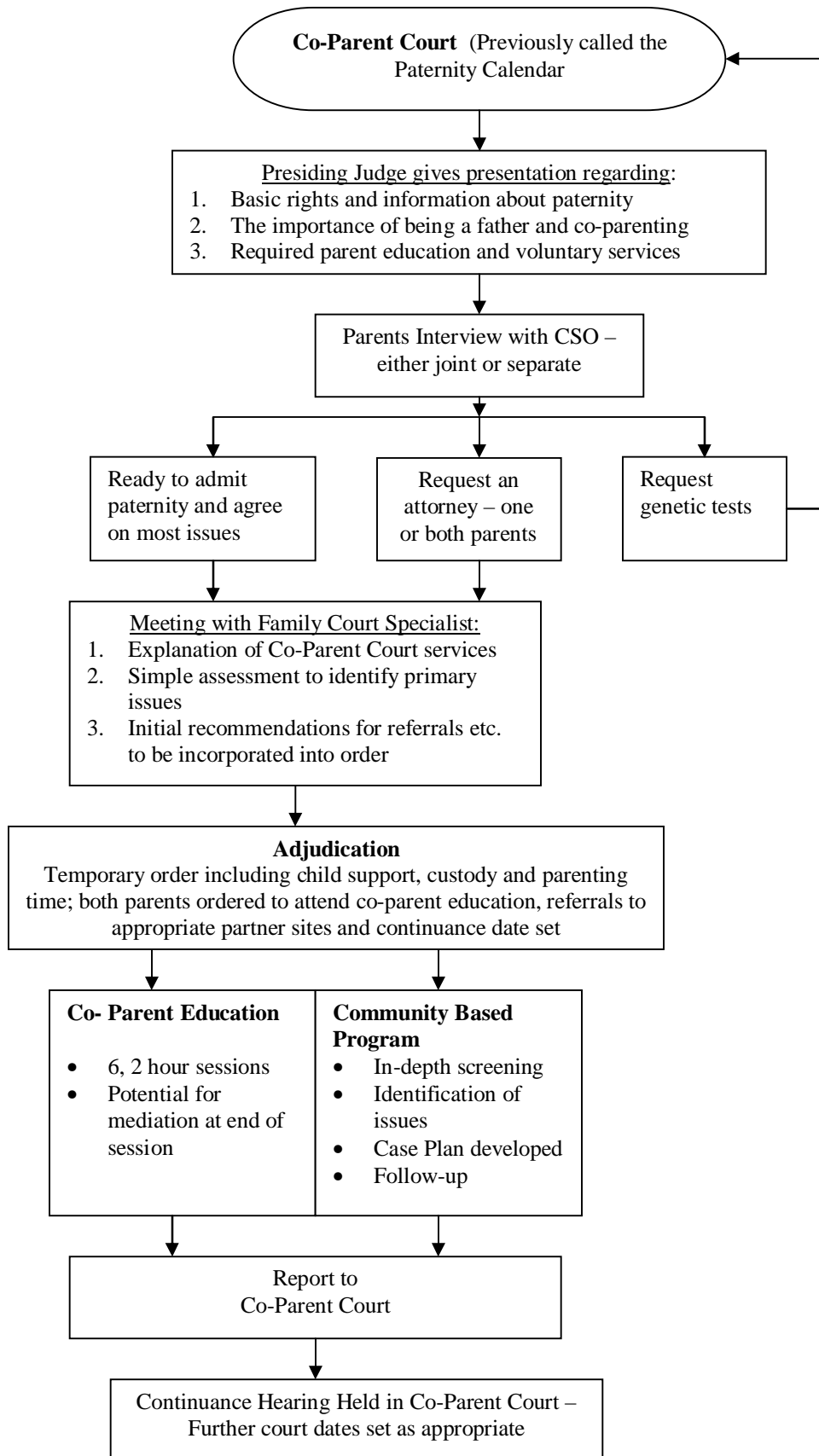
A. Purpose of Solicitation

The Hennepin County Family Court, under the direction of Presiding Judge Bruce Peterson, is developing plans for “Co-Parent Court” to improve services to low income, unmarried parents and their children. Working collaboratively with community partners, the Court wants to provide support, services and incentives to help unmarried parents develop the skills and knowledge to be involved parents - both financially and emotionally, and to develop a healthy co-parent relationship.

We are proposing to create a problem-solving court, tentatively called “Co-Parent Court,” for unmarried parents that will provide limited on-site services as well as referrals to appropriate community agencies. Co-Parent Court will consist of several elements:

- First, upon identification of appropriate funding, we anticipate using case managers or “family court specialists” to meet informally with the parties in the courthouse, administer relevant screening tools, identify their needs and problems, recommend appropriate referrals and programs to the judicial officer, and provide progress reports at follow-up court dates. Partnering community agencies will work closely with us in developing programs tailored to clients referred from Co-Parent Court.
- Second, a coalition of community agencies and the University of Minnesota are in the process of developing a co-parent education program designed specifically for single parents and Fragile Families.¹
- Third, we are exploring the possibility of providing individualized mediation services to help single parents arrive at appropriate agreements regarding parenting of their child.

¹ See below for further discussion of Fragile Families.



B. Partners and Roles

The Court is seeking proposals in order to put together budget and funding requests for Co-Parent Court. There is currently no funding dedicated to this concept but we are confident that we can raise the money necessary for a three- year pilot.

It is understood that in the event funding is secured, any proposal received and evaluated by the Court can be used as a basis for direct negotiation of the cost and terms of a contract between the Court and the particular agency submitting such a proposal. The Court is not obligated to respond to any proposal submitted nor is it legally bound in any manner whatsoever by the submission of a proposal. It is the intention of the Court to enter into a contract with a provider with which the Collaborative can make the most satisfactory arrangements for its needs.

The Court reserves the right to reject any of all proposals with or without cause, and the right to cancel and/or amend, in part or entirely, the Solicitation of Interest (SOI). The solicitation does not commit the Court either to award a contract or to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal.

II. Scope of Service

A. Goal

The purpose of this Solicitation is to select individuals, groups or agencies to fulfill the following functions of Co-Parent Court:

- Provide Co-Parent Education to unmarried parents
- Provide social services to unmarried parents
- Provide mediation services to unmarried parents

Co-Parent Education

The Co-Parent Education will use the “Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for Our Family” curriculum and adapt it for our particular audience in Hennepin County. Together We Can is a revised version of the “Caring For My Family” curriculum which was developed by the Michigan State University Extension Services with funding from the Michigan Department of Human Services.² Fragile Family data was used in the design and development. One of the primary authors of the curriculum, Dr. Karen Shirer, has just moved from Michigan to Minnesota. Dr. Shirer is an Associate Dean in the Family Development Extension Services Department. Dr. Shirer and her Extension Colleagues will provide the “train the trainer” sessions necessary. The training will involve two days of intensive training on understanding the research base for the curriculum, using the curriculum with unmarried co-parents and evaluating the program. The training will be highly interactive and experiential.

The Court is interested in having the “Together We Can” classes delivered in community locations throughout Minneapolis. These locations should be accessible to low-income parents, welcoming and

² The Caring for My Family web page is at: <http://www.fcs.msue.msu.edu/cfmf/>.

comfortable. Mothers and fathers will attend separate classes. The current plan is to require all unmarried parents in the paternity calendar to attend the full session of classes which will consist of approximately 12 hours of classes; most likely in six, 2-hour classes. The Court is willing to entertain proposals for different combinations (e.g. four, 3-hour classes.)

The new Together We Can curriculum has the following goals:

- ü To prepare unmarried parents to set goals to promote and create a healthy future for their children.
- ü To help unmarried parents establish a positive co-parenting relationship that enables them to work together in raising their child.
- ü To ensure the on-going and sustained involvement of both parents, especially the father, wherever possible in the children's lives.
- ü To encourage the on-going payment of child support and provision of other forms of support by the non-custodial parent.
- ü To prepare unmarried parents to make healthy decisions (with their child's best interests in mind) about their romantic and couple relationship.

The curriculum has more material than can be delivered in 12 hours so organizations will have to develop their own plan for delivery of the most appropriate portions of the curriculum.

Organizations interested in providing Parent Education should submit a proposal indicating:

1. The experience the organization has with delivering education or other programs to low income, diverse persons
2. The proposed location(s) and information regarding bus and car access
3. Proposed schedule of classes and the number of parents that could be served (could be a range)
4. The number of educators and the qualifications and credentials of those educators
5. Whether on-site childcare can be provided and if so, details of those services
6. Whether food can be provided and what kind of food (snacks, meals, beverages, etc.)
7. An itemized cost, if any, for providing the above services

Social Service Provision

National research, as well as research completed by our own Fourth Judicial District Research Division, shows that unmarried parents face a multitude of challenges and barriers to successful parenting. These include poverty, un- and under-employment, low educational attainment, unstable housing, criminal history, chemical and mental health issues, and domestic violence. Contrary to popular belief about the prevalence of "one-night stands," the majority of Fragile Families are in some kind of romantic relationship at the time the child was born.³ The data portray a high risk population: in large cities, new unmarried parents are 81% black or Hispanic; 20% of the men are presently unemployed; about 40% have children with another partner; about 40% of unmarried parents do not have a high school degree; and of fathers not living with mothers, 42% have been incarcerated with one-fifth in prison for violent crimes.

³ Eighty-two percent of the families in the Fragile Families and Child Well-being study were either living together (51%) or romantically involved (31%). *What We Know About Unmarried Parents: Implications for Building Strong Families Program*, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., January 2005, no. 5.

The mothers' medium income in the year before birth is under \$4,000 and the fathers' is under \$20,000. While a small percentage of Fragile Families end up marrying, many of them, over time, end up no longer romantically involved.⁴

Social services, designed to ameliorate the effects of these barriers and provide unmarried parents with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed as parents will be needed. The Court is looking for social service agencies who can provide unmarried parents with assistance in self-empowerment and responsibility, relationship development, education, employment, housing, chemical and mental health, anger management, stress management, and basic parenting and child development. The Court is looking for partner organizations who are both "one-stop shops" (e.g. able to provide all of these services) as well as partner organizations who specialize in just one or more areas (e.g. chemical dependency). We anticipate that many of the parents referred to these organizations will need rigorous and supportive case management services in order to be successful.

Organizations interested in providing social services should submit a proposal indicating:

1. The experience the organization has with social services and/or case management to low income, diverse persons
2. The proposed location(s) and information regarding bus and car access
3. Proposed services, the number of parents who could be served (could be a range) and case loads, if relevant
4. The number of case managers and other service providers and the qualifications and credentials of those providers
5. Whether on-site childcare can be provided and if so, details of those services
6. An itemized cost, if any, for providing the above services

Mediation

Unmarried parents in paternity court need to make decisions about custody and parenting time and many need assistance in negotiating a parenting plan. Some unmarried parents have lived together with their children, others have no such history. Some have cooperative and amicable relationships, others experience high conflict. The Fourth Judicial District Research survey conducted with unmarried parents in paternity court this spring found the following:

- 26% were friendly toward each other
- 6% were romantic
- 4% were living together
- 27% had no contact
- 9% hostile
- 28% managed to get along

The Court is looking for individuals or organizations, including law schools, who can provide mediation services to help parents develop and finalize parenting plans. Mediation services could be provided at the

⁴ McLanahan, Sara; Garfinkel, Irwin and Mincy, Ronald, *Fragile Families, Welfare Reform and Marriage*, The Brookings Institute, Policy Brief #10-2001.

end or after completion of the Co-Parent Education classes so that parents have more information and tools with which to make decisions.

Organizations interested in providing mediation services should submit a proposal indicating:

1. The experience the organization has with mediation services to low income, diverse persons
2. The proposed location(s) and information regarding bus and car access or whether the mediation services could be provided at the parent education or social service locations
3. Proposed services, the number of parents who could be served (could be a range) and case loads, if relevant
4. The number of mediators, the qualifications and credentials of those providers and potential case loads
5. Whether on-site childcare can be provided and if so, details of those services
6. An itemized cost for providing these services

B. Co-Parent Court Target Population

The target population for Co-Parent Court are the unmarried parents who need to have paternity judicially established. There are over 1000 paternities established in Hennepin County Family Court every year. The Court is contemplating also including parents who have signed a Recognition of Parentage and who come to court seeking to establish parenting time or change custody.

C. Expected Outcomes

Proposers are expected to meet some or all of the following outcomes of this SOI:

- Enhance unmarried parents' co-parenting skills and knowledge
- Improve unmarried parents progress on case planning goals
- Improve compliance with Family Court orders (both the financial and social aspects of orders)
- Increase unmarried parents' conflict resolution skills and knowledge and reduce the need for court intervention

D. Proposer Qualifications

Proposers are responsible for knowledge of applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations that govern all applicable services and programs.

Requirements for the individual, group or agency proposer include, but are not limited to:

- Familiarity with unmarried parent issues
- Experience in delivering parent education and/or experience in delivering mediation, social services and case management to unmarried parent populations or similar populations
- Demonstration of cultural competence

E. Contracts

- Any contracts will be dependent on the amounts of money raised to support Co-Parent Court
- The contractor will be required to provide their own office space, supplies, support and transportation and provide proof of professional and personal liability insurance.

III. Submission of Proposal

A. Time Line

- August 1, 2007 Release of SOI
- August 10, 2007 at 12:00 Question and answer session for interested proposers:
Family Justice Center
110 South Fourth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Room 157
- September 7, 2007 **Proposals and Vendor Fact Sheet
Due by 4:00 p.m.**

B. Proposal Submission

1. Please submit an electronic proposal to:
Bruce.peterson@courts.state.mn.us with the subject line **Proposal: Co-Parent Court**
2. Proposals must be received no later than
4:00 p.m. on September 7, 2007

The Court reserves the right to accept proposals after the date specified.

C. Technical Support

Questions and inquires concerning any aspect of the SOI and potential contract award may be directed to:

- **Christa Anders, Advance Consulting LLC**
Telephone: 612 920-0574
Email: christa@advance-consulting.com

IV. Proposal Requirements

A. Format

The Court appreciates that there is currently no funding available and desires to make this process as simple and easy as possible for proposers. Proposal narratives need not be long or formal. Short submissions, less than ten pages, will be appreciated.

B. Vendor Fact Sheet

Complete the Vendor Fact Sheet (Attachment A). Name and telephone number of the key contact person should be clearly indicated.

VI. Evaluation and Selection

The successful proposer(s) will be recommended for selection based on the following criteria:

- The proposal addresses outcomes consistent with the goal and purpose of the SOI.
- The proposal includes a detailed plan to fulfill the responsibilities listed above.
- The proposal contains a financially sound and feasible plan for providing services.
- The proposal demonstrates that the vendor meets standards and qualifications needed to provide services
- The requirements of any funding sought

The Court will review proposals and use the information to seek funding. All Proposers will be notified in writing of their inclusion in funding proposals and plans for Co-Parent Court. The Court reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. If clarifications are needed, the Court reserves the right to notify the Proposer. The Court reserves the right to interview any or all Proposers at its discretion. The Court reserves the right to waive minor irregularities in the SOI process. The Court reserves the right to award contract(s) to non-Proposer(s).